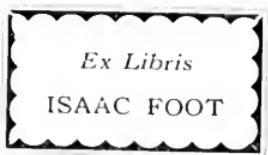


SONGS
OF
DREAMS

ETHEL
CLIFFORD

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SONGS OF DREAMS



SONGS OF DREAMS

BY

ETHEL CLIFFORD

"

JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD
LONDON & NEW YORK. MDCCCCIII

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E. C.



To MOTHER

*Do you remember how at Airolo
We went through fields in which wild lilies grew,
With blue forget-me-nots and pansies pied,
And all the flowers whose names we never knew?*

*Do you remember how at Airolo
I made a posy of the white and blue,
And thought, "Such lilies Mary has in heaven,"
And brought them to my best-belov'd, to you?*

*Dear, as I brought the best of Airolo,
The lilies shining with the morning dew,
So with the best of these the songs I make,
I bring them to my best-belov'd, to you.*



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SONGS OUT OF DOORS

E

A SONG OF RAIN

I AM come lately through the dripping woods
And all my hair is wet with falling rain.
But I am glad of rain: I was born in the West—
Would I might know the salt sea mists again.

I am come lately through the darkling woods
And scarce could see the boughs before my face.
I am glad of darkness: I was born in the night,
And in the dark the bravest dreams have place.

I am come lately through the desolate woods.
There was no voice gave answer to my call.
I am glad of silence: When that I was born
My mother, dying, spoke no word at all.

I will go back into the silent woods,

They are quick with dreams and wet with falling
rain.

My heart is glad of rain: I was born in the West—

Would I might know the salt sea mists again.

A SONG OF FIRE

SPIRIT hid in a stone,

Come to me now. See, with a blow,
I can compel you—I, all alone.

I am the master of Fire,

Spirit hid in a stone. I, all alone,
Use it to my desire.

How the grass burns :

I am the master of Fire. For my desire
See how the flame twists and turns.

The juniper's hidden in flame :

How the bush burns ! Red the flame turns,
The oak tree is veiled in the same.

From oak tree to fir
Reaches the flame. Can this be the same
That I woke? The whole forest's astir.

The forest's astir and awake,
The forest's astir. Oak tree and fir
Are burning alive for my sake.

Genie, come back to my hand,
Spirit out of a stone. Here, all alone,
Watching in terror, I stand.

Higher and higher
Reacheth my master, Fire. Nigher and nigher
Cometh the great god, Fire.

THE BROTHERS

TRAILING knots of the vine,
And under the vine red sorrel,
Was it your fault, or mine,
The sudden quarrel ?

In the high valley
I sought to hide me,
But when I woke at dawn
You were beside me.

Were you not warned of death,
As the swift swallow
Flies low, being warned of rain,
That you must follow ?

She loved you best, and I,
Though far beneath her,
Yet loved her best, so fled
And left you with her.

God touched me for an hour,
And I saw clearly,
I fled because I loved—
Loved both so dearly.

And then you came. Words rose,
A fury filled you—
God left me for an hour—
We fought. I killed you.

Was it your fault, or mine,
The sudden quarrel,
That ends beneath the vine,
Red in red sorrel ?

ISHMAEL

LONELY archer, on the hills

Where thou hast thy life apart,

When thou look'st on Isaac's tents

Is it with an envious heart ?

Brimming full is Isaac's cup,

From his fires the smoke goes up.

When with swift, unsandall'd feet,

Thou the springing turf dost tread,

In the passion of the chase,

Long'st thou for the leavened bread ?

Wouldst thou sleep the scented night

Where the stars are hid from sight ?

Isaac sits beside his fire,
Eating meat and drinking wine ;
In the shelter of his tent
Hath he dreams as rich as thine,
When the purple mists and blue
Weave a veil that God looks through ?

In the tents thou wert a slave,
In the wild thou art a king.
Think'st thou, Isaac, where he sits,
Hears thy glad shouts echoing ?
Riches his, and freedom thine ;
Hunter, hail the gift Divine.

THE LAST HOUR

My thoughts are like the breaking waves
For sadness and for multitude,
And slowly, not to be withstood,
My dead desires rise from their graves.

O joys of Love, and joys of Fame,
It is not you I shall regret.
I sadden lest I should forget
The beauty woven in Earth's name.

The shout and battle of the gale,
The stillness of the sun-rising,
The sound of some deep-hidden spring,
The glad sob of the filling sail.

The first green ripple of the wheat,
The rain-song of the lifted leaves,
The waking birds beneath the eaves,
The voices of the summer heat.

If I be laid where hind and fawn
And wild things of the woodland meet,
Shall I not hear the small light feet
Of hares in dew-wet grass at dawn ?

I have no dread of what shall be,
And I repent not, nor regret,
Only I fear lest I forget
The joy that Earth has given me.

APRIL 8TH, 1901

Oh, the winds are out to-night,
Riders of the storm let loose :
Listen to the singing reeds
Put to an unwonted use.
'Tis a night for Pan and Zeus.

On the sea the fishing-boats
Bear each one a dancing light,
High in Heav'n the dancing stars
Cross the sky like swords of might :
Zeus is lord of Heav'n to-night.

Through Earth's veins there runs to-night
Ichor of the ancient Greeks ;
Look ! within the shadowed woods,
Every faun a dryad seeks.
Listen ! it is Pan who speaks.

Pan is at the reeds to-night,
Earth is on the ancient plan.
Listen to the risen wind :
Earth has quite forgotten man.
'Tis a night for Zeus and Pan.

THE GYPSY WOMAN

THE gypsy woman
Lives on the moor,
She sleeps in a tent
With a curtained door.

Low is her dwelling
And hard her bed,
But the stars at night
Are a crown for her head.

Rough is her greeting
From all that 's human,
But the morning smiles
At the gypsy woman.

The wind is her harper
And brings from far
His songs of wooing
And shouts of war.

On the printed page
She need never look,
The changing sky
Is her Holy Book.

She knows not the call
Of church-bells ringing,
The falling rain
Makes sweeter singing.

And the voice of the lark
At morn and even
Is a key to open
The gate of heaven.

A SONG OF THOUGHTS

THE purple rain-clouds climb the hill of heaven,
But storm in vain the stronghold of the sun,
Though high in air their chariots are wind-driven,
On earth the winds are silent every one.

Sighing a little, softly, without moving,
The silver birches stand beside the mere,
In charmèd stillness, as with too much loving
Of their own slenderness reflected there.

My thoughts go up among the silver birches,
Like tired birds that fain their nests would keep ;
Forth into time unwaked my spirit searches,
And backward in the past that will not sleep.

It seems as though the thoughts of those before me,
Who stood and watched the silver birches grow,
Reached from the leaves that silently hang o'er me
To soothe a sorrow that they did not know.

So may my thoughts, though sad and void of laughter
And laden with a pain that may not cease,
From out the leaves, to those that follow after,
Come down, like brooding birds, and give them
peace.

A SONG OF MORNING

I WOULD give thanks to God for morning time ;
Of all the happy day of hours God-given,
It is the prime
 Best lifts my heart to heaven.

Before day comes into the valley here
I dream of those who live beyond the hill,
And wonder if the silent-footed dawn
 Into their lives is bringing good or ill.

The waiting earth is like a chidden child
That, wistful, looks if pardon may be there ;
When, suddenly, the sun is on the hill,
 God smiles, and it is morning everywhere.

And when the morn comes in with falling rain,

Yet is it still the time of all most dear—

It is the angels round about God's throne

That weep glad tears, because they are so near.

TWILIGHT

IT is the hour when Night, disconsolate,
And weary of the unimagined state
 She holds in hidden places far away,
Thinks with new longing of her wayward mate,
And yearns toward the singing, young-eyed Day.

She brings him the eternal stars for crown,
And woven webs of dreams no man has known,
 And scented silences, and shadows deep ;
And tries with music, where the streams run down,
 To win him to her ere he fall asleep.

But Day in dreams heard Echo on the hill,
Singing and calling from the summit still,

Singing and calling on a silver note,
Singing and calling on a silver note,
Till through the air his spirit seemed to float,
Rising and falling on a silver note.

Questing he bears his sword across the sky,
Seeking for her who charmed him with a cry,
A silver calling from a dreamland peak ;
Till, finding not, he takes the West to die
And will not wait to hear what Night shall speak.

And Night sits listening where the slow rain sings,
Dreaming that Day once more a garland brings
And comes in state his once belov'd to greet,
Filling the East with splendour of great wings,
To lay his crown at her forgotten feet.

A SONG OF THE MOOR

THERE are strange voices calling on the moor
That stir my heart and wake an echo there.

What is it knows the hidden springs of me?
What is it answers from within me here?

The heath is blood-red in the sun's last look,
The wind begins to wake again, and I,
Half in a dream, remember the unknown,
And blindly feel some ancient mystery.

Was some old battle fought upon the moor?
Down in the hollow sets a tide of pain
And on the height a savage triumph swells,
And dies away, and louder grows again.

Out in the open places courage is,
But in the darkness of the wood I hear,
From out the closest of the undergrowth,
The sudden-indrawn breath of hidden fear.

By the North Thicket is a savage place,
A man might well a lust of vengeance sate
There, holding some lithe throat, watching the life
Die slowly from the burning eyes of hate.
And by the thorn what dreadful thing has passed?
The air is quick with bitterness and shame :
What dark compulsion, born of earlier sin,
Laid a fresh stain upon a tarnished name?

There are strange doings here upon the moor.
My spirit answers to the unseen hands,
And my soul knows the unseen multitudes
That press upon me in these empty lands.

And this my life, that is in houses pent,
And toils in towns to win its bitter bread,
And goes soft-shod about the sheltered streets,
Wakes to its own among the unknown dead.

A SONG OF TOURNEY

IN the woods the lists are set,
Carpeted with purple ling,
Compassed round with mighty pines,
And above the branches swing.

Rides no knight unto the joust?
Who shall tourney on this field?
None may see the victor crowned,
None may see the vanquished yield:

Only—should the lightning glance
Through the branches overhead,
You shall see a flashing lance
And shall hear a rushing tread,

As the sobbing chargers strain
Forward in the unsought fight,
When the distant thunder rolls
And the sun is put to flight.

A SONG OUT OF OXFORDSHIRE

WOULD we might see the crocus blow
Where Evenlode and Windrush flow,
The purple flame by autumn set
For jewel in her carcanet,
Where Evenlode and Windrush flow.

Would we might see the wistful morn
Win courage as she gilds the corn,
And watch the evening's valour die
Like an enchanted memory
As darkness comes and hides the corn.

Would we might see the valley kist
Once more by tender wreaths of mist,

Until it seems that there must lie
The secret land of faery
Behind the rising wreaths of mist.

I would the time were come again
When we might watch the falling rain,
Close hidden in our forest house
That is so roofed with woven boughs
There is no entrance for the rain.

Would we might tread again the road
Where Windrush flows and Evenlode,
And see the skies we see in dreams
Lie mirrored in the singing streams,
In Windrush and in Evenlode.

A SONG IN SPRING

To-MORROW ! Ah, To-morrow is a dream.

It is another name for rainbow gold,

The dancing mirage none may ever reach—

It is the hidden house of Hope grown old.

Nay, sigh not for To-morrow, Best-Belov'd,

When every hour To-day is filled with sweet :

Look up and see the leaves above your head,

Look down and see the flowers about your feet.

To-day we are together, Best-Belov'd,

Take hands with me, be glad, and wear your

crown.

We will go royally about the world

And sow the seeds of gladness up and down.

To-morrow. Ah, To-morrow is a dream

Holding a secret it will ever keep.

Then live To-day, for soon the night will come

And close our eyes into unwilling sleep.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

A SONG OF FEAR

I.

FEAR comes in sleep, and all along the way
That souls must travel between day and day.

In sleep my soul sought sanctuary,
But, to the place of healing,
Fear followed all the way,
And when I knelt to pray,
Lo ! Fear beside me kneeling.

II.

Fear's garment is the shadow and the dark,
As rustling leaves her step that makes no mark.

Waking, I sought to hide me,
And through the open door
I fled, but in the wood
Beneath each tree Fear stood,
And followed on the moor.

III.

The moving waters called me,
But from the changing sea
Whereon my vessel sailed,
Although her face was veiled,
Fear's eyes looked up at me.

And in thine eyes, Belov'd, when I came near
And looked, I saw the mirrored face of Fear.

VALE

I AM not fair,

But you have thought me so,

And with a crown I go

More rich than beauty's wear.

I am not brave,

But fear has made me so,

And dread lest I forego

The honour that you gave.

I am not wise,

But you loved wisdom so,

That what I did not know

I learnt it in your eyes.

I am not true,
But you have trusted so,
That faithfully I go
Lest I be false to you.

If Heaven I win,
I can no virtue show
But that you loved me so.
Will they not let me in ?

OUT OF THE CITY

I WOULD be in the woods,
Where the spears of rain,
Broken by the innumerable leaves,
Fall to the ground like silent tears for the slain.

I would be on the sea,
Where the wind blows keen,
With all its dreadful histories of men
Fallen and lost in the lifting waves between.

I would be on the moors,
On the heath I'd lie
And hear through the silence of the scented air
Only the song of my heart and the lark in the
distant sky.

Here, in the sleepless town,
In the crowded street,
The air is heavy with men's destinies,
And the song of my heart is lost in the sound of
the passing feet.

A SONG OF HAPPINESS

THE days pass and the nights, and the wind blows:
I have planted a tree of Happiness, and the tree
grows.

The light comes and the dark, and the rain falls:
I have planted my tree of Happiness within high
walls.

The north wakes and the south, and the spring's
here:
I watch by my tree of Happiness and let none near.

The flowers spring and the grass, the hay is mown:
About my tree of Happiness a vine is grown.

The year dies and the leaves, and winter nears:

I have watered my tree of Happiness with falling
tears.

The clouds lift and the mists, and a bird sings:

But about my tree of Happiness close Sorrow clings.

THE HARP OF SORROW

SORROW has a harp of seven strings,

And plays on it unceasing all the day.

The first string sings of love that is long dead,

The second sings of lost hopes burièd,

The third of happiness forgot and fled.

Of vigil kept in vain the fourth cord sings,

And the fifth string of roses dropped away.

The sixth string calls and is unanswered.

The seventh with your name for ever rings—

I listen for its singing all the day.

A SONG OF LIFE

I HAVE seen the world. Was it fair ?

Ay. Fair and foul combined.

About the sepulchre

The roses twined.

I have sailed the sea. Was it kind ?

Ay. Kind and cruel too,

Now loud with battle song,

Now low to woo.

I have loved a maid. Was she true ?

Ay. True and false together,

False in fair, but true

In stormy weather.

I have lived my life. Was it well?

Ay. Well and ill beside.

See where my banner's white

With stains is dyed.

I have dreamed a dream. And waked?

Ay. Waked with waking's pain.

My time is come to sleep

And never wake again.

THE HOUSE OF SORROW

IN the doorway of the House of Sorrow

I stand, and Sorrow sits within.

Through the window of the House of Sorrow

A measure from without came drifting in.

Like a strong beam of the sun, that through the
window

Points to a thing unseen, the song came in ;

And, listening, I stole out, and in the doorway

I stand, and Sorrow sits within.

In the doorway of the House of Sorrow

I stand, and like one blind, I lift my face

And listen, and I hear the steps of Sorrow

Who comes to seek me from the darkened place.

Like a child half-awakened, in the doorway

I stand and listen, and I hear the rain

And, from behind, the swift, sure steps of Sorrow—

O thou without, wilt thou not sing again?

A SONG OF ROSES

You say your heart has dreamed a place for me
Where banks of roses are so thickly set
A man might thrust his hands an arm's length deep
And find but roses, roses all dew-wet.

How did you know the place my heart had dreamed,
The silent place of roses and of sleep
Where I would lie and none should know me there
Or reach me through the roses strewn so deep?

Not even you should know the secret way,
The hidden door into my hiding-place,
Where I would lie for ever, with closed eyes,
And sleep, with dew-wet roses on my face.

THE CURTAIN OF DREAMS

THE painted Curtain of Dreams is torn,
The Bird of Love is dead,
The Lute of Joy is broken in twain
And the spirit of Youth is fled.

What use to mend the Curtain of Dreams
If the spirit of Youth be fled ?
What use to mend the Lute of Joy
When the Bird of Love is dead ?

Let Fate bring roses or come with rue,
But come ere Love be dead,
For Joy and Sorrow alike are grey
When the Spirit of Youth is fled.

IN SORROW'S HOUSE

SORROW, why is it dark within your house,
When grief is borne of love that is a flame?
Light torches, Sorrow, Love will lose the way
And see not who shall call upon his name.

“ Alas ! What need have Love and I of light ?
My heart holds darkness that no torch can find.
Alas ! What need have Love and I of light ?
What torch can show the way when Love is
blind ? ”

A SONG OF SORROW

SORROW came in the night,

Out of the dark she came.

I sat alone, by my hearth-stone,

Watching beside my flame.

Long I strove in the dark

For the life I might not win.

My door stood open wide

And Sorrow entered in.

My flame flickered and swayed

As it were blown by a breath :

I looked askance at Sorrow's eyes

And her pale mouth beneath.

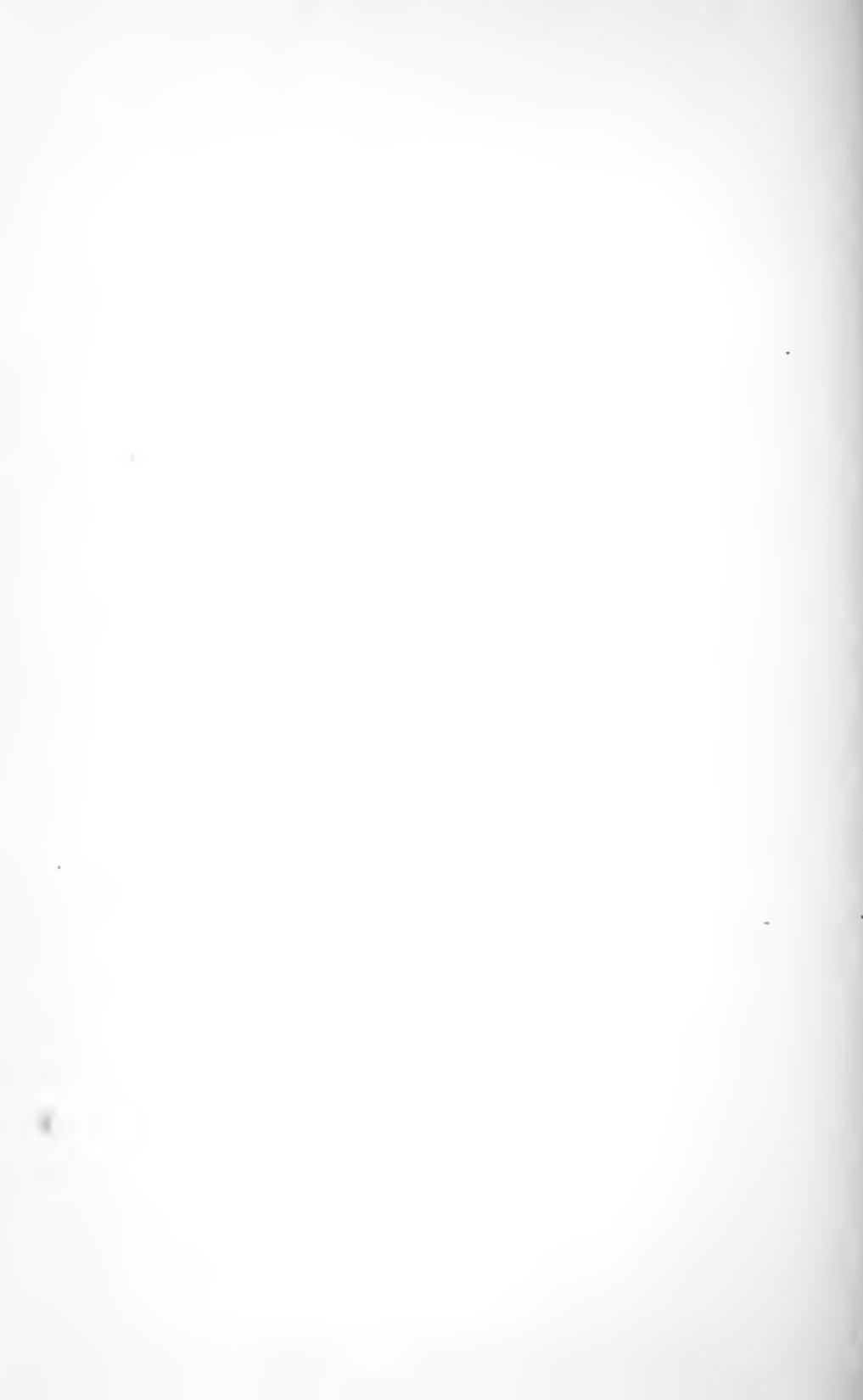
My flame flickered and swayed

And then it sank and died.

I sit alone, by my hearth-stone,

With Sorrow at my side.

SONGS IN REMEMBRANCE



S. H.

“HIGH God hath ta’en your saint away:
Have ye not prayed to be forgiven
That ye had kept her but one day
From passing straight to God in Heaven?”
“*Hath God such need of saints in Heaven?*”

“Why sit ye wan and open-eyed
What time the vigil-candles flare?
In God’s star-garden shines your star:
God’s gain, what heed *your* place is bare?”
“*And is God’s garden then so bare?*”

“*High God bath galaxies of stars,*
We had but one to shed us light.

*A myriad saints proclaim His name,
Our one bath left us in the night.
Come back, sweet soul, across the night."*

“Would ye recall whom God hath ta’en?
The soul that wins the higher air?
Your memories to you remain,
Give thanks for these, nor quite despair.”
“*Give thanks for what remains? Despair!*”

A SONG OF THE WAR

“SORROW comes from the South.

Will joy return no more ?

Our eyes are blind with falling tears.”

“*Have ye not wept before?*”

“Our thoughts are in the South,

Where night and day they range ;

We have forgot the face of joy.”

“*Are Sorrow’s eyes so strange?*”

“Our hearts are in the South

With Fear and Horror torn ;

Our dreams are of the newly-dead.”

“*Is Azrael new-born?*”

*“Sorrow comes from the South,
But North she hath her place,
And East and West, in War or Peace,
Sorrow unveils her face.”*

A SONG OF VICTORY

“ARISE and weave for Victory
Fresh robes and garlands new!”

“*Does Victory go clad in black,*
And is she crowned with rue?”

“Ring out the bells for Victory,
The glorious message tell:”

“*How strange that for a victory*
They ring the passing bell.”

THE RELIEF OF LADYSMITH.

G. W. S.

BRAVE heart, where you lie at rest,
In the long-beleaguered town,
Can you hear the night-wind lift the flag,
Where the Southern stars look down ?

You are passed beyond the door
To which no key we find:
Can you look backward to the earth,
Or is it dark behind ?

Where you lie in your grave, brave heart,
Can you hear the war-drums beat ?
Can you feel the pulse of the trampled earth
Beneath victorious feet ?

The message goes from the hill,

And near and far is read,

The living know it overseas—

But who shall tell the dead?

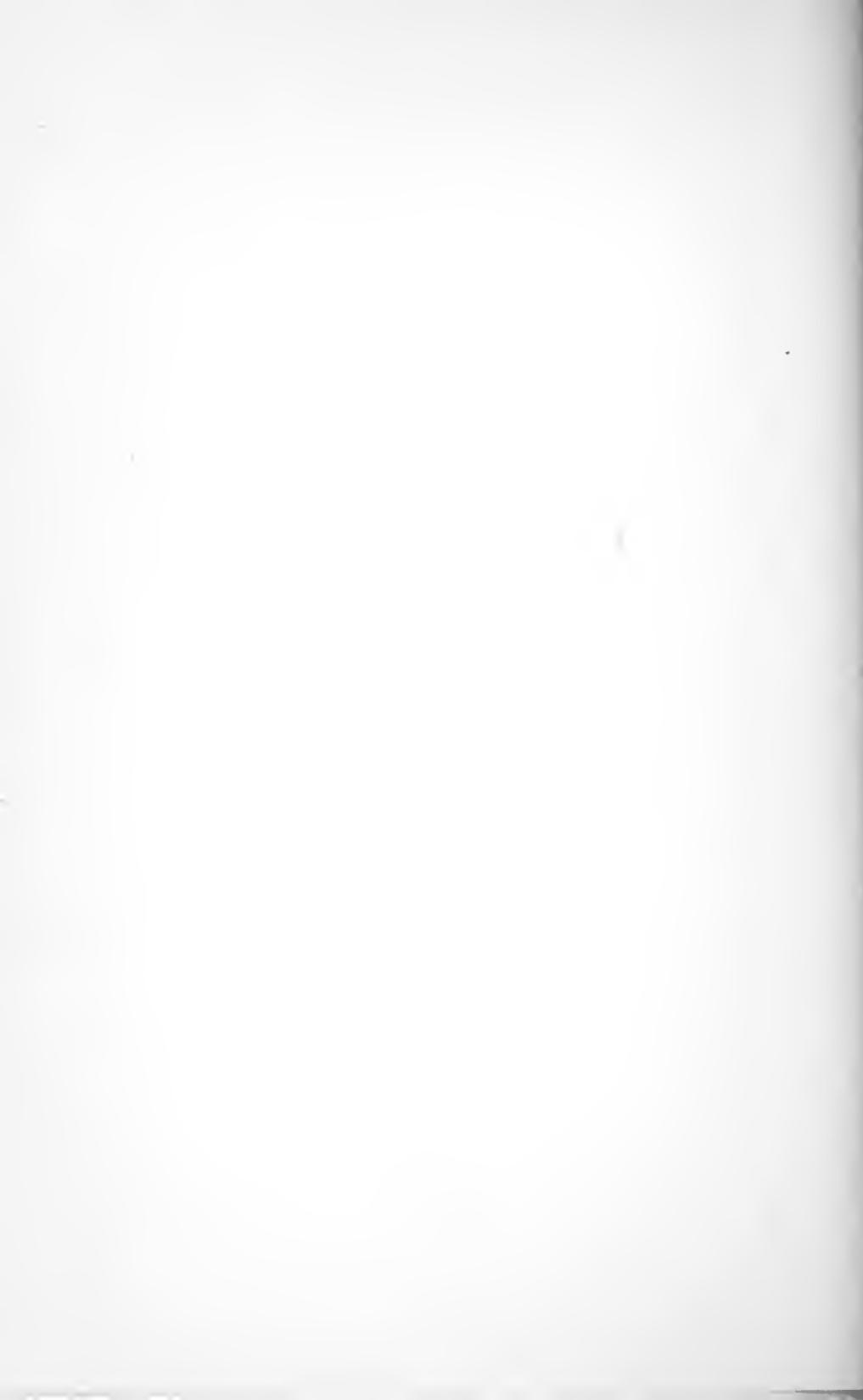
A SONG OF PEACE

Sunday Night, June 1st, 1902.

THE news of peace goes forth
With shouting through the land,
Glad heart is answering heart
And hand is meeting hand—
My soldier is lying still,
Under the hill.

The city is awake
High festival to keep,
The men sing in the streets,
The children rise from sleep—
My soldier is sleeping still,
Under the hill.

The news of peace goes forth
From island shore to shore,
Time halts with those who wait,
But now we wait no more—
My soldier is waiting still,
Under the hill.



SONGS OF LOVE

F

A SONG OF LOVE'S COMING

To some Love comes so splendid, and so soon,
With such wide wings, and steps so royally,
That they, like sleepers wakened suddenly,
Expecting dawn, are blinded by his noon.

To some Love comes so silently and late
That all unheard he is, and passes by,
Leaving no gift but a remembered sigh,
While they stand watching at another gate.

But some know Love at the enchanted hour:
They hear him singing like a bird afar,
They see him coming like a falling star,
They meet his eyes, and all their world's in flower.

TRISTAN WOUNDED

SWEET, love me till I die, I shall not know
When I am dead if you still hold me dear,
So love me till I die, and my still lips
Will wear the smile they wear when you are near.

Sweet, love me till I die, I shall not know
When I am dead though Love should pass away.
So love me till I die, and my closed eyes
Will keep your image till the judgment day.

Ah, love me till I die, I shall not know,
Being dead, what other love you give or take.
So love me till I die: my quiet heart,
Holding that dream, will never ask to wake.

A SONG OF LOVE'S EYES

DEAR my lady, when the woods
Wore old Autumn's russet crown,
Dost remember how thou said'st
Love had surely eyes of brown ?

When the mist about us crept,
Like some stealthy beast of prey,
Where we sat beside the stream,
Love we thought had eyes of grey.

Later, when of cowslips we,
Each for each, made rosaries,
High upon the wind-swept down,
Had not Love then golden eyes ?

When the drooping bluebells vied,
Not in vain, with heaven's hue,
Dear, that morning in the wood
Love, I thought, had eyes of blue.

Not until the pale white rose
Wove the wreath that crowned thee mine
Woke the truth within my heart:
“Love,” I cried, “hath eyes like thine.”

A SONG OF DELAY

LOVE, pluck your flowers:
To-morrow they may fade,
And, faded, who shall tell
How once they were arrayed?

Love, wear your crown:
To-morrow you may sleep,
And, sleeping, who shall say
What state you used to keep?

Love, love me now,
For soon it will be night:
In darkness hearts forget
The gladness of the light.

THE HEATH-MAID

I KNOW no name for my love,

I met her out on the weald.

Her hair is brown as the fallen leaf

And her eyes as the new-ploughed field.

She is small and brown, my love,

She is small and slender and brown.

Her hands are rough with the open wind

And she wears a tattered gown.

She is young, but her heart has seen

What beyond dreamland lies.

She is all a child with her wistful mouth,

But there's wisdom in her eyes.

She goes with her small light feet
Where flowers and woods grow free,
With her head thrown up and her hair afloat
And her sudden look for me.

She sings the songs they sang
Who first knew grief and joy ;
The songs the workers of Egypt knew
And the builders of towered Troy.

I have given her all my heart
And all that was ever mine,
My secret castle of dreams and all
That is in me of divine.

I have never a name for my love,
And I know not whence she came,
But the look and the song and the step of her
Have made my soul a flame.

THE MODEL

SHE had such little feet,
Who climbed each day the narrow winding stair,
They scarce could bear her up the long steep way,
And her head drooped beneath its weight of hair.

She had such little hands,
Who worked so hard to win her share of bread ;
Which, being won, but gave her strength to wish
That she were lying dead.

She had such wistful eyes
Whereon her lids hung heavy as in sleep.
She hardly lifted them to let the tears
Shine through when she would weep.

She had so sad a mouth
That, made for love and starved of its sweet dower,
Drooped as a rose droops in the fire of noon,
A rose ungathered hour after hour.

Her spirit was so proud,
I might not help her for the love I had,
Though, all unloving, I had ached to see
So young a thing not glad.

She lies so fast asleep
That through her dreams no call of mine she
hears.
And I had given all to win Death's right
To comfort her of tears.

TWO DAYS

THE day I saw you first, Belov'd,
A bird upon the briar-rose
Kept measure with my singing heart.
And, as the kingdom true love knows
I entered in and took my part,
He sang as sang the bird that waked
The morning first in Eden close.

The day you went away, Belov'd,
The chariot of the sun was late,
The air was full of rain and mist.
And all the hour you made me wait,
Before you kept the parting tryst,
The skies wept as the angel wept
Who held the sword at Eden gate.

A SONG OF STARS

OPEN my window to the stars :
The stars are swords of light,
A myriad shining swords to guard
My Love to-night.

Open my window to the stars :
The stars are jewels rare ;
The best is not too fine a crown
For my Love's hair.

Open my window to the stars :
The stars are angels' eyes,
The happy angels set to watch
Where my Love lies.

A SONG OF CLEMATIS

PURPLE and green the clematis
Leans down my lady's mouth to kiss.
Purple and green: we mourn a king
With purple for deep sorrowing.
Is Love then dead, that long has been
A king enthroned our hearts between?

Purple for grief: but Hope has been
For ever garlanded in green.
Then sing of green, and purple bring
For state and not for sorrowing.
Purple and green the clematis
Kisses where a king might kiss.

AT THE GATE

WHAT will you pluck in Love's garden,

Honesty and rue?

Or love-in-a-mist by the twilight kist

Or heart's-ease wet with dew,

Heart's-ease with tears of dew?

There's rosemary in Love's garden,

But that remembrance brings.

There are roses red, in a hidden bed,

With petals curved like wings,

Red petals like Love's wings.

There is fair store in Love's garden

Of herbs to heal and bless,

But the fairest vail is poppies pale

That bring forgetfulness,

Sleep and forgetfulness.

LOVE'S SHRIVING

Love, one day, on mischief bent,
Vowed that he would play the friar.
I must be his penitent,
His confessional the briar.

Celia in the bower lay
All the while that I was shriven,
Was she sleeping? Who shall say?
But when Love, his counsel given,
Spread his wings and upward flew,
Through the roses swung above,
Celia waked, and at her feet
Lo! I knelt, confessed of love.

TO M.

WHEN you sing, O lady mine,
I remember, long ago,
Philomela in the grove,
Singing of her plaintive love,
Had a voice as small and fine,
Sweet as your voice is and low.
And whoever heard her song
Bore it in his heart for long.

Lady, when you dance for me,
I remember, long ago,
Wanton Aphrodite gave
Red-leaved roses to the wave,

And the sea-nymphs danced for glee
With the petals to and fro.

When they wearied of their play
Drifting rose-leaves filled the bay.

When I hear you laugh, I think
And remember, long ago,
How from high Olympus' mount
Fell the silver-shining fount
Giving youth to who would drink ;
And the music of its flow
Echoes through the dreaming years
When my heart your laughter hears.

But you can be grave beside—
I remember, long ago,
Daphne, playing in the shade
With a little mortal maid,

Frighted her until she cried.

Tears proclaimed her bitter woe,

And the nymph, in tender-wise,

Bent and kissed them from her eyes.

THE FORGOTTEN SONG

How shall we meet that have been parted long?

I have forgot the burden of the song

We sang together very long ago.

How shall we meet that used to be so dear?

I have forgot the page that was so clear

In the lost book whose name we do not know.

Have you forgotten too? You tell me, no,

But can you sing the song of long ago,

Take up the measure and complete the stave?

How strange it were if all the years that seem

To stand between us proved an empty dream

And I could give you now what then I gave!

Alas ! the rose half-gathered droops and dies
And tears that fall not still may blind the eyes,
The song unfinished halts until the end.
How shall we meet that parted long ago ?
I have forgot the song we used to know
And broken music none may ever mend.

THE LOST SPRING

THERE were two lovers lost the spring ;
They did not hear the first birds sing,
Nor see the frozen waters break
Their prisoning of ice and take
Their freedom when the first buds wake.
Their thoughts moved in a single ring,
Their eyes were closed to everything.

They did not see the tender blue
The skies wear when the year is new,
Nor the first veiling of the hedge
In misty green nor, in the sedge
And reeds beside the water's edge,
Where first the iris pennon flew,
Because they loved with love untrue.

Because they loved with shame and fear
The Place of Dreams was never near ;
The dreams they had were cold and grey,
And all the day and every day
They tried to pray and could not pray.

They said, " It is the winter here
For all the year and every year."

True love had made his triumph ring
From sunrising to sunrising,
And for true love the world had been
A magic place with dreams between,
Such dreams as love in spring has seen.

There were two lovers lost the spring
For love shame-faced and whispering.

THE PRISONER

“A ~~SECRET~~ hope lay hidden in my heart
That one day you, forgetting your disdain,
Would find me not a being all apart
But one with you in bearing joy and pain.

A hope that one day, all your queenship dead,
As man and woman you and I might stand;
And only Truth between us two should tread,
And I should hold your hand within my hand.

I asked one hour between the sun and moon
When there should nothing be of what had been
But just the silence and the empty sea,
And only you and I, and Truth between.

But Time counts no such hour in all his sands.

I die behind these bars, you live a queen."

She knelt and gave him both her trembling hands,

"Shall bars divide when there is Love between?"

LOVE'S SONG

THE House of Sorrow seems so far away
When I am with you. Almost I forget
That other eyes than ours are filled with tears,
That hearts are breaking. Hold me closer yet.

Shall we not vow that none shall come to us
For comfort, help, or pity, while we live,
But shall, because of our great happiness,
Go from us with the best we have to give ?

When you are far, the still stars learn your name :
I whisper it to them across the dark ;
And, in the dawn, the brown birds learn your
name :
It mounts to heaven with the earliest lark.

Let me not be too happy, for I dread

Lest after rose-time come the time of rue—

Lest God be jealous of our happiness,

Reach forth His hand and set me far from you.

SONGS IN IMITATION

SENEX AD CHLOEN

THERE sings no nightingale to win you forth

And I myself am old and cannot sing,

But, see, the pear tree stands in bridal white :

Have pity on me, Chloe, it is spring.

I would not wrest you from the Thracian boy

Who loves you and whose vows of love you
love ;

I ask but that you sit awhile with me

And let the blossom kiss you from above.

Give me your hand ; long, long ago I sat

With Lalage beneath the flowering tree ;

As you she sat and mused with love-lit eyes—

Ah ! Chloe, weave a golden dream for me.

The nightingales are dumb, the blossom falls,

The hand I hold in mine is limp and cold,

The stars are dead that lived within your eyes.

Have pity on me, Chloe, I am old.

A SONG OF LAMENTATION

I WROTE a song for Corydon,
All tears and lamentation,
With plaint that Chloe, pretty rogue,
Had wrought his desperation.

“She was untrue,
She was unkind,
An end to all his woes he’d find
In self-annihilation.”

My verses breathed despair and scorn,
To terrify and flout her,
When lo ! the quarrel was made up
And, “ Had I dared to doubt her ?

O shame !

A man of evil mind !

To call his Chloe aught but kind,

And sing such songs about her."

They both began to rail at me,

And I then to discover

How hard the poet's lot may be

That sings to please a lover !

CHLOE'S SONG

I PRAY thee, Strephon, break thy lyre
And cease to sing my praise;
Indeed, such mockery my ire
To fury's point doth raise.

Thou know'st I am no "queen divine"
With sunbeams in my hair,
But just a simple brown-tressed maid
And not surpassing fair.

I am not "coy," I am not "proud,"
No "gulf" us twain doth "sever;"
And where I tread the daisies lie
As they were dead for ever.

And when I walk I am alone
Unless Fate thee should send me,
A “ thousand thousand little loves ”
Did never yet attend me.

When I go forth, it rains as oft
For me as other mortals :
The sun is not my “ serving-man ”
Nor waits he at my “ portals.”

Shalt call me “ Sweet,” shalt call me “ Dear,”
But not a “ crownèd Venus.”
So drown thy poesy in love
Or all must end between us.

For though the ways of love be sweet
And thou the man for me,
Each single joy I will forego
An thou wilt not agree.

STREPHON'S SONG

'Las, Chloe, have I tuned in vain
Mine unaccustomed lyre ?

Dost thou despise the classic strain
To which I did aspire ?

I read in books of ancient France
How maidens should be won.

“Vow fiercely,” so they said, “she owns
The moon, the stars, the sun.”

“Vow flowers spring beneath her feet,
Vow that you die of grief.

Compare her with the heathen gods,
Vow night brings no relief.”

I do not know how Venus looked
Nor who the dame might be ;
I did obey the ancient book,
Comparing her with thee.

And, as thou know'st, I eat and drink
With unabated zest.
And, though I love, no dream of thee
Hath kept me from my rest.

Behold, I break my lyre, and since
I am the man for thee,
Hear, Chloe, now, my only vow :
Thou art the maid for me.

SONGS OF DREAMS

BROCELIANDE

THE forest of the winding water-ways

Shows dimly imaged in the glass of dreams,
And faintly falls upon the dreaming ear

The measured singing of its shadowed streams.

The mirror shows the battlemented towers

Where, at an upper window, sat of old
The pale princesses garlanded with flowers
And girdled with great jewels set in gold.

The dimly-litten chapel on the hill

Where knight untried kept watch with virgin
sword,

Or touched with reverent lips the jewelled Cup
And for a glowing instant knew his Lord.

Shall I not know again the chapel's gloom,
Repeat again the half-remembered prayer,
And win by some forgotten feat of arms
My yet ungraven shield a noble wear?

Shall I not some day see the tower plain,
And hear the chosen princess say the word,
And bear her on the dreamland charger forth,
And guard her with the visionary sword?

From out the iridescent veil of Night
The princess of the past smiles down on me.
Only in dreams her hands are laid in mine,
Only in dreams her shining eyes I see.

The forest calls me, is there no way back?
I have no place in what the world is grown.
Ah! let me breathe again the enchanted air
And tread the ways that once my soul has known.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

THERE were no stars the night we said farewell :

 Nay, I remember, though you may forget,
The night was starless and the winds were still
 At my heart's breaking and your heart's regret.

There was no bird awake before the dawn,
 No stirring in the hedge or in the yew;
The folds were sleeping and the woods were mute
 When my life ended, yours began anew.

There came no sound of water from the mere
 That watched in darkness for the hidden moon.
I knew you false, but would believe you true :
 I know you lost, but look to find you soon.

I did not think the earth could be so still.

No sound was in the air nor any breath.

When happiness within my heart lay dead

The world without was silent as in death.

MÉLISANDE IN THE WOOD

LEAN down, lean down to the water, Mélisande,
And look at your mirrored face,
With your eyes for fear and your mouth for love
And your youth for pity's grace.

Look long, look long in the water, Mélisande,
Is there never a face but your own?
There is never a soul you shall know, Mélisande,
Your soul must stand alone.
All alone in the world, Mélisande,
Alone, alone.

Drink deep, drink deep of the water, Mélisande,
From the shadowed pool drink deep.
Your soul shall long for the water, Mélisande,
As your eyes shall long for sleep.

THE PRINCESS IN THE SEA

My sail throws a purple shadow
On the green water.

I am bound upon the quest
Of the sea-king's daughter.

Her hair is a purple shadow
In the green water:
No earth-maid has such hair
As the sea-king's daughter.

Her eyes are like stars in shadow
In the green water:
No earth-maid has such eyes
As the sea-king's daughter.

Alas ! in the vain shadow
Of the green water
My heart has sought in vain
For the sea-king's daughter.

Though I lay in lasting shadow
In the green water,
My heart would still weave dreams
Of the sea-king's daughter.

The long weed that makes a shadow
In the green water
Would seem to me the hair
Of the sea-king's daughter.

In the stars that pierce the shadow
Of the green water
My heart would see the eyes
Of the sea-king's daughter.

THE DESOLATE PRINCESS

WHAT shall it avail me that I plant me gardens

Now that my beloved's eyes are closed in sleep ?

From among the cedars call my singing maidens,

Think ye he can hear them where he lies so deep ?

What shall it avail me making pools of water ?

Never more reflected shall I see his face.

Root from out my borders calamus and camphire,

All the earth henceforward is a desert place.

What shall it avail me that I weave me garlands,

Sandal me and tire me ? Blind in sleep he lies.

Open wide the window, the air may take my

tresses,

Break the painted mirror. He hath forgot mine

eyes.

North and south my spirit with the wind goes
circling;

Now that he hath left me rest I may not know.

In my hanging gardens the almond trees are
blowing,

In the city doorways the stones are grinding low.

THE PRINCESS IN THE TOWER

Love came to the princess

In the high tower.

“I will have none of Love,” she said,

“Tears are Love’s dower.”

Love hid his face from the princess

In the high tower;

And “Would I knew the tears,” she said,

“That are Love’s dower.”

THE CAPTIVE PRINCESS

I AM bidden to gather roses
From a garden dead in snow.

You shall as soon find in my heart
Hope, that died of weeping long ago.

The world that once had been my throne
Underfoot hath trod me down ;
And I, that should have been a queen,
Gather roses for another's crown.

THE LOST PRINCESSES

ARE you too stolen away, Princess,
Even as I, from the tower of dreams ?
Are you too lost in the wood of the world
With straying feet by the wandering streams ?

It is dark in the wood of the world, Princess,
We are come too far for the sunset bars,
But over the tops of the waiting trees
The dawn shall enter between the stars.

Our names are cried in the wood, Princess,
Do you hear them cried through the wind and
rain ?
Do you think if we follow the calling voice
We shall see the light on the tower again ?

We must see that our crowns shine bright, Princess,
Perchance it shall happen at dawn of day,
When the winds are dead and the leaves hang still,
We shall come at last on the hidden way.

In the waiting silence of dawn, Princess,
From the wood of the world with its wandering
streams,—
With eyes grown strange to the place we knew,—
We shall come again to the tower of dreams.

THE PRINCESS BY THE WELL

A FAIRY prince came singing through the wood,
And sighing, “Out, alas !” and, “Well-a-way !
The world is grey, romance is dead, and hid
The rare princesses of an older day.”

The ranger’s daughter sang beside the well :
“Will none but princes pass by where I sit ?
I am not fair for princes.” Her long hair
She twisted up and made a crown of it.

The prince came near and saw her by the well,
A low-born maiden wreathed with yellow hair.
She marked a careless prince and turned away
Her eyes, and breathed a sigh into the air.

But, ere they parted, Cupid, from a cloud,
Let through the sun. The day, erst grey and
cold,

Grew radiant; and the prince, beside the well,
Beheld a princess crowned in shining gold.

And she looked up and saw a man who loved,
Looked in his eyes and loved who looked through
them. . . .

They watched together, through the well-water,
Sink out of sight his prince's diadem.

THE GOLDEN BIRD

A GOLDEN bird came to the window,
(Smile at love, and sigh at love, but tears drive
love away).

A golden bird came to the window,
Where the Princess sat and wept the livelong day :
“ Lift up your head, Princess,
And smile into my eyes.
Before sad tears, Princess,
Love flies.”

The golden bird sang at the window,
(Sigh for love, and smile for love, but tears drive
love away).

The golden bird sang at the window
But the Princess wept unceasing all the day :

“Look up and laugh, Princess,
Have done with tears, be wise.
On what should be my bed
Grief lies.”

The golden bird sang at the window,
(Smile at love, and sigh for love, but tears drive
love away).

The golden bird sang at the window
But his pleading voice grew faint with falling day :
“Reach out your hand, Princess,
And take me to your heart.
Love must with day, Princess,
Depart.”

The pale Princess looked from the window,
(Sigh at love, and smile for love, but tears drive
love away).

The pale Princess looked from the window
When night with loving wings had hidden day.
The voice is still, Princess,
That sang in tender wise.
Love drowns in tears, Princess,
Love dies.

CAIN

ALL day long Eve wearied for the garden.

Not for her the comfort Adam knew
As he watched the wheat-ears slowly harden,

As the plaited roof above him grew.

“ For the sake of all my lilies, pardon.
God,” she prayed, “ give back my violets blue.”

Adam, sowing, watching, later reaping,
Wrestling with the earth and life and fate,
Knew no dreams for weariness in sleeping,
Knew no grief. But early still and late
Eve in dreams beheld the angel keeping
Watch beside the ever-hidden gate.

Till to Adam came a wondrous calling.

 Sleeping hope like flame began to burn:

“ ‘Tis God’s messenger,” he thought, “ recalling.

 Eden gate stands wide and we return.”

Then he knew whose voice, all song forestalling,

 Held all joy and sadness turn in turn.

“ My belovèd sings,” he said, “ no other.

 She would cheat my heart and hide her pain.”

So went in, undreaming of another.

 In the shadowed place where she had lain,

Radiant and transfigured, Eve the mother,

 Leaning on her elbow, sang to Cain.

CAIN'S SONG

Lo, I am matched with Jehovah. Life of his giving
Have I destroyed and made vain. Cold and apart,
Abel lies dead in his grave while I, Cain, am living,
Warm, with the blood in my veins and desire in
my heart.

Outcast am I: but the earth, fertile and kindly,
Stretches beneath me. The sun sets in the West,
Golden and red, and I see it, while Abel sleeps
blindly,
Deaf to the rain and I hear it. Lord, which is
best?

Branded am I: but the deer, russet and sable,
Still are for quarry. And I hunt not in vain.

Mine is the triumph of storm and the gladness of
rain, but Abel

Nothing he knows though his face is upturned
to the rain.

Cursèd am I: but the night has mysterious giving
Of dreams, and day lights fires that burn in the
east and west.

Thy favoured one lies in his grave and I, thine
accursèd, am living,
Quick in the wonder of earth and the sunlight.
Lord, which is best?

CAIN'S FINDING

THIS was our brother. Cain lies dead at last

Under the thorn,

In the desolate house of night.

His joy in the fleeing quarry is over and past.

He will sing no more to the morn,

And forgets how the shadows fall in the evening

light.

Look. In his hands he holds a faded wreath

Of flowering thorn.

He has plucked the spines from the stem.

Such Adam, our father, made when Eve drew
breath

At first, when love was born,

In the early days when God was good to them.

Only in dreams he can have learned the way

To weave the thorn,

For love he might not win.

Did he see in dreams a face he could not stay?

His hands are bruised and torn,

As forbidden paths he had sought to wander in.

We dare not close his eyes. He had God's ban.

The pitying thorn

Drops petals as it fain would be his pall.

What does he know? Once on the hill he ran,

But now lies here forlorn.

Take hands and come away; the shadows fall.

A SONG OF EGYPT

LONG ago, in Egypt, the strange kings were waking :

Sunrise and sunset and the midday sun,

Rain and the bird's voice were theirs for the taking ;

They lived, and we live, and Life's not done.

Long ago, in Egypt, the strange kings grew older :

Year in and year out, and the spring's allures,

All these they knew and, ere their hearts grew
colder,

They loved, and we love, and Love endures.

Long ago, in Egypt, the end drew a-nearer :

Daylight and midnight and stars overhead,

All these they saw and, as daylight grew dearer,

They died, and we die, but Death's not dead.

Far away in Egypt, the strange kings lie sleeping :

Rising and falling the old Nile flows ;

Through seed-time and growing and the time for
reaping

They wait, and we wait, for what—none knows.

JEZEBEL

JEZEBEL, the proud queen,

Looked from the tower.

Jehu she saw afar

And knew her hour.

“ Shall I, a king’s daughter,

Be found unaware ? ”

Jezebel, the proud queen,

Tired her hair.

“ Shall I, a king’s daughter,

Betray my race ? ”

Jezebel, the proud queen,

Painted her face.

Her maidens cowered
Under the wall;
“The foe too strong, O queen,
Try not a fall.”

Jezebel answered,
Her voice rang clear,
“Hide an ye will, slaves,
Does a queen fear?”

“Give him soft words, O queen,
So win we ease.”

Jezebel mocked him,
“Had Zimri peace?”

Jehu, the furious,
Blind to the crown,
Called up the tower wall,
“Slaves, throw her down.”

The horses broke Jezebel

Under their feet.

Jehu, the blood-stained,

Went in to meat.

THE SLAVE

TOWARD my lord I lean my weary head,
But in my heart is longing for my home.
Would in my grave that I were lying dead,
Far from the golden weariness of Rome.

I am aweary of the weary games,
Of blood and death my tired heart is full.
Nor fight of gladiators wins me now,
Nor combat with the Lithuanian bull.

When with my weary hands I try to shut
The thunder of the chariots from mine ears,
The thunder of the surf along the shore
Where is my home, my little sister hears.

And when my maidens lift the heavy band
Of gold and set it low upon my brow,
My little sister pulls a garland sweet
From hedges where the faint wild-roses blow.

When in my weary arms my Roman lord
Lies sleeping, from mine eyes the tears start:
Far, far away, my little sister lies
Beside my love, and sleeps against his heart.

THE CENTURION

SINGING of victory through the night
I go, and the stars above my head
Shine on my sword that fought the fight
And shine on the eyes of the sleeping dead.

Over the terrible field of war,
Past the harvest of silent slain,
I meet the wind that blows from far
And sings as I of the fight again.

Carrying only my gleaming sword
I go as a god with wingèd feet
And sing of victory. Mars, the lord
Of battle, judge if my song be sweet !

How shall they know, the fallen dead,
If I tell them not how the day is gone?
They followed once where their leader led,
But now they sleep and I go alone.

What if for them no dawn is near?
They have known the battle and fought the fight.
And through the walls of sleep they hear
The song of victory through the night.

THE BRASS POT

Dust of Verona clings about the pot

I brought you out of Italy to-day.

Dust of Verona and a mist of dreams,

Echo of voices long since rapt away.

And strange dead hands have closed about its shape,

That now lie quiet in the dusty earth.

I think it holds the thoughts the fashioner

Held in his heart the day he gave it birth.

Or does it carry the remembered prayers

Of those who knelt by some forgotten shrine

Whereon it stood with flowers for Mary's name,

Wild roses, cyclamen, and columbine ?

Dust of Verona and a mist of dreams,
Strange thoughts it holds and prayers of those
who sleep.

Dust of Verona, dreams of Italy,
Prayers of our saying, thoughts that we too would
keep.

A SONG OF WILLOW LEAVES

I DREAMED there sailed a ship across the sea.

Inland it came to where I bound my sheaves,
But through such secret and tree-shadowed streams
That all the deck was green with willow-leaves.

The sails of it were red as iron-ore,
They showed like flame the close-grown banks
between.
My heart leapt up, but when the ship came near
I saw the deck with willow-leaves was green.

It seemed as though the moving earth stood still.
The heart would stay the planets when it grieves.
The sun grew dim and all the wind could say
Was that the deck was green with willow-leaves.

The ship went on. I know not where it went.

The stream goes far the winding banks between.

I think my heart had sought to stay the ship,

Before the deck with willow-leaves was green.

The earth called and the wind sang, but in vain.

I sat alone among the endless sheaves.

I knew my ship of dreams was passed and gone

And all the deck was green with willow-leaves.

A SONG OF THE WAY

How will it end, the race of life, for us,
Who sit and speak in whispers of faint dreams
And the dim heritage of worlds unknown
Until the real all unreal seems ?

Yet, after all, what matters it the end ?
We shall have known the gladness of the way :
The magic mornings, the enchanted nights
And all the changing wonder of the day.

We shall have known the challenge of the dark,
The throb of dawn before the first bird sings.
And, looking deep into each other's eyes,
Have read the knowledge of the hidden things.

Though we attain not yet we shall have shared
Together, for a space, the bread and wine,
Have stood together on the peak of dreams
And seen far off the mystic city shine.

THE LARK

THE little angels listen by the door
Of heaven, but they cannot hear the lark :
“ Where is our chorister,” they cry, “ whose song
Has coloured all our dreaming through the dark ? ”

Alas ! the song is prisoned and confined,
That held the happy lark against high Heaven,
And from a cage in man’s close dwelling-place
His plaintive voice must greet the morn and even.

The little angels kneel by Heaven’s door
And listen, but they cannot hear the lark :
“ Alas ! ” they cry, “ that those who loved us once
Have shut our singing-bird into the dark.”

A SONG OF PASSING

WOULD that I might take the day
In a net of painted hours,
Bar the course across the sky
With such chains of woven flowers
That the eternal race were lost
In a mist of petal showers.

Would that I might woo the night
With the songs the planets know,
Bind her fast with happy dreams
Till she went with steps so slow,
All across the silver stars,
I should never hear her go.

Would that I might hold the year,
Stay her in her rushing flight,
Loose her fingers from Time's wing,
Snatch a single day or night,
Win an hour more of dark,
Wrest an instant more of light.

Time, the cruel, to my side
Brings the year, a princess sweet,
Lifts her veil and bears her on
Ere our outstretched hands can meet ;
Makes me fain to soar with wings,
Drops a feather at my feet.

THE SHIP OF DREAMS

My ship of dreams that sailed the open seas
Is now at last come home
And, sailing up still rivers set with trees,
Forgets the empty foam.

My spirit had no place wherein to dwell
When earth was lost in sleep ;
But now the helmsman of the ship knows well
What harbour he shall keep.

There is no wind of fears, nor any rain
Of grief, on these still streams
The helmsman steers through, till he sees again
The haven of his dreams.

Until the mystic city shows in sight
And the last anchor falls,
So silently it shall not wake the night,
Beneath the city walls.

I know not if the gates will then stand wide,
Or there be naught to win:
I shall have had the vision for a guide
And dreamed of entering in.



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